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December 11, 1997

(Justice)

The following is being distributed at the request of the Human Rights Commission:

The Human Rights Commission met for its final meetings of 1997 on December 10 - 11 in St. John's. Twenty-three complaints were dealt with: nine were dismissed because there was found to be no evidence of violation of provisions of the Human Rights Code; six complaints were withdrawn by the complainants; seven complaints had settlements approved; and one file was closed after it was determined the complainant had moved and had left no forwarding address or other means of contact.

To mark the 49th anniversary of the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations on December 10, the Commission released to the public its report and recommendations to the provincial government for changes and amendments to the Newfoundland Human Rights Code. It was recommended that the Code be expanded to include family status, source of income, citizenship, age and voluntarism as prohibited grounds from discrimination.

The Commission expressed its pleasure that government had enacted legislation the previous day to amend the Code to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground. It had been one of the recommendations included in the Commission's report. Other recommendations of the Commission include: the deletion of section 4(2) of the Human Rights Code which exempts the denominational school system from the provisions of the Code, and extending the time period for filing complaints from six months to up to one year after the incident took place.

It is the Commission's hope that the government will see fit to enact these changes in time for the 50th anniversary celebrations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a year from now.

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